

Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Surgeons) Amendment Bill 2023

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Submitted by: Australasian Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons
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Committee Secretary
Health and Environment Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Q 4000

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Via email: HEC@parliament.qld.gov.au

Re: Inquiry into Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (surgeons) 2023

The Australasian Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (ASAPS) welcomes the introduction of the Health Practitioners Regulation National Law (surgeons) Amendment Bill 2023. We strongly encourage the committee to support and expedite passage of this legislation as it underpins much-needed reforms to improve patient safety and will assist patients in recognising untrained doctors who are still performing invasive surgery.

ASAPS is a not-for-profit, member-based organisation that has existed for over 40 years and represents over 300 Specialist Plastic Surgeons practising in Australia and New Zealand. Our members are frequently called upon to treat avoidable life-threatening complications and sub-standard aesthetic results following cosmetic surgery performed by doctors without recognised surgical training.

As an organisation, we have been working tirelessly to achieve better patient safety standards and outcomes and have engaged extensively with the many agencies involved in regulating and reforming this sector. We have contributed to many of the inquiries and reports provided to the committee, including the Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement, and were very supportive of the final Australian Health Ministers Decision Regulatory Impact Statement.

As we have argued consistently since 2018, we strongly support restricting the use of the title 'surgeon' to Registered Surgical Specialists who have undergone surgical training and hold a Fellowship from the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. In ASAPS' view, the proposed amendment is vital to protect patients from harm and enable them to make informed decisions about their medical practitioner and treatment choices.

As noted by your Committee members at the 3rd of May hearing, this amendment is only one element of a suite of reforms urgently needed to ensure patient safety and transparency. It would be supported by additional regulation to require all medical practitioners to use their official AHPRA-registered title to convey a true and accurate reflection of their training and registration status.

As a part of overall implementation of the amendment by departments and regulators, consideration should also be given to educating patients with an intensive public campaign about the change, registered titles, how to find and interpret them, and how to identify quality informed consent. The impact of this amendment is inextricably tied to whether the community understands registered titles.

It is essential that subsequent to the passage of the amendment, there are rigorous monitoring and active compliance programs. Regulators will need to consider their resourcing and priorities and proactively seek out non-compliance as a deterrence measure. Reliance on complaints and investigations will not deliver the outcome this amendment seeks to deliver.

If the monitoring and compliance regime to bring affect to the amendment is lacklustre patients will continue unknowingly making poorly informed choices based on the twin assumptions that the title seems plausible, and that the legislative and regulatory framework would not allow unsafe medical practices.

ASAPS strongly supports the amendment and rigorous regulatory implementation of it thereafter.

Should the committee require any further information on the position of ASAPS please contact Paula Gelo from Australian Public Affairs on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely



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